

John 1:19-34

I. Prologue (1:1-18)

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

A. By John the Baptizer (1:19-34)

1. John and the Pharisees (vv. 19-28)

We were first introduced to John the Baptist in vv. 6 and 15, in which the Apostle John makes it plain that the Baptizer *was not that Light* (v. 8), but rather on the scene to *bear witness of the Light* (v. 15). With Jesus' own baptism approaching, the Apostle turns his attention to the Baptizer in v. 19, at which time *the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem* to question him about his identity.

John denies being the Christ, Elijah, and the Prophet.¹ Instead, we read in v. 23 that John identifies himself as the messenger of Isaiah 40:3. He is the *one crying in the wilderness* telling others to prepare for the coming of the Christ. I think of Noah, whom Peter calls *a preacher of righteousness* in the days leading up to the flood (2 Pet 2:5). Noah cried out in the midst of an unrighteous generation, warning them of what's to come. The Baptizer, likewise shouts a warning to those in peril, preparing his hearers to welcome and receive the Messiah.²

The Pharisees, confounded by the Baptizer's statement, asked him why then he baptized (v. 25). If he isn't of great renown, why should he be baptizing people? He responds in vv. 26-27 by saying:

I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.

In other words, he recognizes his role as a forerunner, as an "advance team," if you will, to prepare the area for the main event. This coincides with the Apostle's characterization of him in vv. 7-8, 15. Much the same should be said of us. Our responsibility is to represent Jesus well in the world. We are not the "main event;" it's not about us. Our goal is to point others to Jesus and bear witness to Jesus. Should people seek to elevate us, we ought to turn right around and give God the glory. Should we grow discouraged thinking we labor in vain or without recognition, we likewise ought to turn around and give God the glory. We are voices crying in the wilderness, calling people to recognize Jesus as the Christ!

2. John and Jesus (vv. 29-34)

Sure enough, the One to whom John looked shows up on the scene in v. 29, and John's exclamation is worth unpacking:

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Let's focus in on two takeaways in this verse. First, Jesus is *the Lamb of God*. This, no doubt, is a fulfillment of the Old Testament. Leading up to the tenth plague in the land of Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to *take a lamb* for the Passover sacrifice (Exod 12:3). This lamb was to *be without blemish, a male of the first year* (Exod 12:5; i.e., in the prime of life). On the appointed day, *the whole assembly of the*

¹The Israelites were looking for an end-times Elijah, as prophesied in Malachi 4:5.

²For his part, Mark begins his Gospel by combining Isaiah 40:3 with Malachi 3:1.

congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight (Exod 12:6). As a result, every household that applied the lamb's blood to their doorposts would be delivered from God's wrath.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. As a result, the second thing we consider is that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, *takes away the sin of the world*. Nearly 1,500 years after the tenth plague, Jesus died on the Passover as the ultimate sacrifice for sins. Now, anyone who applies His blood to their lives (through belief³) escapes the wrath of God. Jesus has taken away our sins, and the result of our sins!

When John sees Jesus approaching, he points Him out to everyone (v. 32). "This is the One! I'm here to point Him out! I was called to baptize people in order to point people to Him!" As the Baptizer bears that witness, and as he baptizes Jesus, he *saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him* (v. 33). It's this same Spirit by whom Jesus baptizes. Unlike John, who baptized with water, Jesus' baptism is superior, as it's by the Holy Spirit Himself.

We read in the other Gospels that John was originally hesitant to baptize Jesus; after all, He was greater than the one baptizing (cf. Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:6-11; Luke 3:21-22). Nevertheless, John relents and baptizes Jesus. As Jesus came up from under the water, all four Gospels note that the Spirit descended upon Him, and the Synoptic Gospels then note the Father's approval of the Son:

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt 3:17; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

While the Apostle doesn't record that line from the baptism, nevertheless the point stands that John can now see and testify *that this is the Son of God* (John 1:34). The stage is set. The curtain has risen on the Main Player. The Word, the Light, the Life of Men has arrived, and He's done so to *take away the sin of the world*. Now it's His time to reveal Himself to the world.

³Rom 3:22; 4:5; Gal 2:16; 3:24; Phil 3:9; not to mention all the occurrences in the Gospel of John!